

## What's An Old Lady For?

July 3, 2003

I am proud to be a septuagenarian, part of a critical mass of our society. We are probably retired, although the feisty lady who cuts hard Italian salami to a ¼ mm at my local supermarket disproves that stereotype. She is the laughing, hearty, customer-service-focused deli queen of the grocery store. Retire? Why?

For those of us septuagenarians who decided not to slice salami, the question arises: *What's An Old Lady For?* Well, I can answer that for myself. I am a good baby sitter, and come relatively inexpensively. I gave my neighbors, parents of a new baby girl, the gift of 100 Grandma hours. The little one and I are great friends by now.

I am good for talkin' on the back porch... and nothing makes me happier than tea-time with friends there. We talk children, philosophy, family, books, films, children and husbands... Sometimes we talk about professional things... but not often. Life is so much more delicious, and now the menu is ours to choose from, and there are no prices printed on this menu. I realize: I have already paid the price for such a succulent dish.

I am good for letter writing: perhaps a lost art with e-mail which is not mail but notes without borders. I have purchased some wonderful stationery and write (on the computer) long letters to family and friends. I have discovered that leisure is the most precious commodity in this world. Plato said that once... who? PLATO? *Learning needs leisure.* I agree.

Leisure allows me to find brilliant old films now on DVD with commentary by directors and actors. I share this discovery with friends: for example, the commentary on the DVD of Katherine Hepburn and Henry Fonda's *On Golden Pond* is itself a wonderful film. I can avoid the violence and nonsense of twenty-first century Hollywood by this research and living.

Ahhhh! This old woman can cook! Nothing delights me more than having folks here for a special dinner. I am not a gourmet cook: but people leave my table satisfied and glad!

This old woman can read--and does--a book a day! Nothing pleases me more than sharing a wonderful title with friends, like:

- ☞ *The Guru of Love* by S. Upadhyay
- ☞ *Sister of My Heart* by C. Divakaruni
- ☞ *Say When* by E. Berg
- ☞ *Da Vinci Code* by D. Brown
- ☞ *No.1 Ladies Detective Agency* by ----- Smith

Reading literature takes me across the globe: to Nepal, to Africa, to Europe. It moves me by the affective aspects of the novel. When else does what you read move you to tears or hilarious laughter? Literature has been enhanced by my reading of biography: McCulloch's *John Adams*, Isaacson's *Benjamin Franklin*.

I confess that his old woman loves to live through a mystery on TV with *Inspector Morse* or *Poirot*, and the *Law and Order* team! I watch Wimbledon and the US Open with delight. I love the British comedies, especially *As Time Goes By* and *Ballykissangel!*

An old lady like me is good for snoozin'. Nothing is more pleasant than a long nap after a good lunch. Or a long sleep in a comfortable bed. I am in bed by nine and up with the rising sun.

An old lady like me is good for hanging in with friends who are in hospital or in convalescent homes. After my experience with hospitals and convalescent homes, I want to stand by my friends, be an advocate when I can, and at the least, let them know I know what they are suffering.

I am good for taking part in anything that is *world class*: the Metropolitan Opera, Wimbledon ( as an avid spectator ), World Cup Soccer, Charlie Rose interviews, Katherine Hepburn films...

An old lady is good for praying. And there is more and more need for that in our generation! Prayer is a state of mind, not a discrete activity, at this age. The incentive or catalyst to prayer can be a butterfly, or a bird song, an e-mail note, or a quiet reflection on a moving film.

This old lady is good for making music: simple piano tunes and lots of great opera and classical music on CDs. Music is the background for reading and at times, the foreground for itself.

This old lady can keep a beautiful home. I am not a gardener but I can mow a mean lawn, and I love my home with a wild passion. When I travel, I count the days 'til I can be at home. No cruise ship could be more lavish. No tour has more to offer than my home. In Ireland or Italy, in Indonesia or Iran, I had the same sensation: Nice! But nothing like my back porch!

Sounds like, an old lady is for living. With gusto and verve, with joy and a sensitivity to pain and suffering, with prayerfulness and music and lots of good wine!